



# Bringing Home the Word

Twenty-sixth Sunday in Ordinary Time (C)  
September 29, 2019

## Learning How to Love

By Mary Katharine Deeley

How do we best love God and one another? A student, wanting to become more like Christ in welcoming all people, decided that he would greet every one of his fraternity brothers every week and ask how they were and that he would say hello to the man who sat in front of the drugstore in town begging for change and invite him to lunch. In May, when it came time to see how he did, the student had indeed talked to his fraternity brothers every week and greeted the beggar, but he never did invite him to lunch. “I just couldn’t do

it,” he said. “I was a little afraid of what it would mean. Would I be responsible to help him again?” We talked about it a little, and I invited him to put that question to God in prayer.

I’m not sure we have an easy answer to what it means to look someone in the face and invite him to share a meal. And I daresay not many of us would do what that student set out to do. But St. Paul urges us to “pursue righteousness, devotion, faith, love, patience, and gentleness” (1 Timothy 6:11). That’s a lifetime’s work and possible only with the grace of God. Surely, as we grow in those virtues, we will come to see all people as worthy of our time and care without worrying about what might happen in the future. It may not be practical and it certainly won’t be easy. But the demands of God’s love compel us to try. And if we do so, we might not share the fate of the rich man in Luke’s Gospel who learned too late how best to love. +

## Sunday Readings

### Amos 6:1a, 4–7

Now they shall be the first to go into exile, and the carousing of those who lounged shall cease.

### 1 Timothy 6:11–16

The blessed and only ruler will make manifest at the proper time, the King of kings and Lord of lords.

### Luke 16:19–31

“Abraham said, ‘If they will not listen to Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded if someone should rise from the dead.’”

*As we grow in virtue,  
we will come to see all people  
as worthy of our time  
and care.*

## A Word from Pope Francis

More than a place, [heaven] is a “state” of soul in which our deepest hopes are fulfilled in superabundance and our being, as creatures and as children of God, reach their full maturity. We will finally be clothed in the joy, peace and love of God, completely, without any limit, and we will come face to face with him!

—General audience,  
November 26,  
2014



## REFLECTION QUESTIONS



- Do I ever reach out to a stranger in need, or am I too busy or fearful to get involved?
- Do I direct a large portion of my wealth and material blessings to those in need?

# Facing Life's End with Faith

By Mary Jo Dangel

Twice in eight years, I've been involved in making end-of-life decisions about my two adult sons, Tim and Ritch, who were born with cystic fibrosis (CF), an incurable hereditary disease. While the decisions were the most difficult I've ever made, knowing their wishes and the Church's teachings, as well as having faith in the promise of eternal life, made it easier.

In 2011, while awaiting a lung transplant, Tim, age thirty-three, was admitted to the intensive care unit (ICU) with life-threatening problems. Initially, his condition was serious but hopeful. He was receiving nutrition and medications, and was attached to a ventilator and other life support. His treatment fell under what the Church calls "ordinary" means: efforts that offer more realistic hope of benefit to the patient than burden. The Church teaches that such ordinary means must be used.

Soon Tim took a turn for the worse. He became unconscious, and his vital signs deteriorated. I prayed for healing but knew Tim's situation was hopeless. As I looked at him, hooked to tubes and machines, I thought of Mary watching Jesus on the cross and wondered, *How long will Tim hang on his cross?*

I wasn't surprised when the CF specialist who had been treating Tim and Ritch explained why the medical team was



recommending we sign a do-not-resuscitate (DNR) order. Through tears, she said that, if they tried to resuscitate him, broken ribs could puncture his diseased lungs. Also, Tim's weak heart would likely stop again.

Resuscitating Tim under such hopeless conditions falls under what the Church calls "extraordinary" means: efforts whose potential benefits do not outweigh the burdens they impose. The Church allows death to happen by withholding extraordinary means, but it condemns the willful taking of life through euthanasia or assisted suicide.

Thankfully, our family agreed that the only thing more painful than signing the DNR order would've been making Tim endure more suffering without any benefit. Tim wanted to be an organ and tissue donor, but the condition of his body made him an unsuitable candidate.

Tim's death convinced Ritch to get his own legal affairs in order. Ritch, age thirty-six, had a rare liver condition associated with CF. In 2016, he passed out due to internal bleeding and was admitted to the same ICU where Tim had died. Ritch's condition soon became hopeless. He clung to life despite blood transfusions and other efforts. Fortunately, our priest came and said that discontinuing Ritch's life support was compatible with Church teaching.

Ritch had signed his organ-donor card but, like Tim, his organs were unsuitable for transplantation. However, some tissues (skin, bones, tendons, for example) could be used to save and improve the lives of many people. We said yes.

The same CF specialist who had been at the hospital when Tim died rushed to be there when Ritch's life-support systems were discontinued. Again, we cried together and I thanked her for caring for my boys. Our immediate family stayed with Ritch until his heart stopped.

I can only imagine the difficulty of making these decisions if we hadn't known Tim's and Ritch's wishes or if there had been disagreements. It's critical to have your legal affairs in order, understand Church teaching, and discuss your wishes with loved ones and doctors.

## Guiding Wishes

The American Bar Association ([americanbar.org](http://americanbar.org)) has resources on health-care advance directives and related legal issues, and the prolife pages of the Catholic bishops' site ([uscbb.org/prolife](http://uscbb.org/prolife)) has a comprehensive explanation of Church teaching on end-of-life issues.

Making end-of-life arrangements in advance reminds us of the dignity and value of our earthly lives and the eternal reward that awaits us in the next. +



*Lord, help me to be generous  
in showing your love and  
compassion to those in need.*

—From *Grateful Meditations for Every Day  
in Ordinary Time*, Rev. Warren J. Savage and  
Mary Ann McSweeney

## WEEKDAY READINGS

September 30–  
October 5

**Monday**, St. Jerome:  
Zec 8:1–8 / Lk 9:46–50


**Tuesday**, St. Thérèse of the Child Jesus:  
Zec 8:20–23 / Lk 9:51–56

**Wednesday**, Holy Guardian Angels:  
Neh 2:1–8 / Mt 18:1–5, 10

**Thursday**, Weekday:  
Neh 1:1–4a, 5–6, 7b–12 / Lk 10:1–12

**Friday**, St. Francis of Assisi:  
Bar 1:15–22 / Lk 10:13–16

**Saturday**, Weekday:  
Bar 4:5–12, 27–29 / Lk 10:17–24

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